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ONE "FELLOW'S" REACTIONS TO THE FIRST
YEAR OF THE URBAN STUDIES CENTER CUR-
RICULUM AT RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY

Speaking very personally, the greatest changes this year brought about for me have been ones of attitude toward life, toward education and toward my job. Possibly because I approached the program with some degree of skepticism, the end result appears even more positive by contrast than it otherwise might have. I think all of us Fellows sincerely wondered what any University could possibly teach us "experienced practitioners".

From another point of view, I became somewhat discouraged at the start because I thought I did not find the ideal courses which might serve to fill all the chinks in my professional armor. And I was initially so annoyed at my inability to keep up with the vast reading assignments in the various courses that I temporarily exacerbated my problem by taking on a speed reading course for the entire fall semester. This turned out to be a rare and fulfilling experience, although it was tough sledding.

As if this adjustment to an entirely new form of life were not enough, I was also plagued with the responsibility of breaking in two new employees at the Mayor's Commission on Group Relations office in Newark. This ate in on my study time the first semester.

So, with these few problems, the year began. Without them, what later transpired would not have been half so meaningful, because

I would have been deprived of the sharp contrast between my early fear of failure in the new academic life and the gradual satisfactions and rewards which developed throughout the year. Admittedly this begins to sound like sophomore soft soap; therefore perhaps I should become a bit more specific.

Early Reactions

Naturally all of us Fellows were somewhat apprehensive at the beginning. Because we were adjusting to a new milieu, and probably because each of us felt intellectually threatened in his own way, we guardedly shared some of our deep-rooted fears with one another by criticising the staff: first, Dr. Lubin, then the Urban Studies Center, and finally all of Rutgers and Douglass.

Several of us even wondered why we shouldn't be teaching and "you-all" (Urban Studies Center staff) and the rest of the professors at the University shouldn't be improving your questionable backgrounds by picking our collective brains. I believe one of our members left the Center without ever having an opportunity to alter this obvious ego defense attitude, which finally exploded in his regressive rebellion and childish withdrawal.

I do not pretend to know the portent or content of this Fellow's feelings or thoughts, but I believe one small lesson could be drawn from the experience. We probably all felt varying degrees of aloneness and abandonment during the early months of the program. But since I ^{can} only speak for myself in this highly subjective and speculative area, the temporary feelings of loneliness appeared to result from the fact that no one from "top" staff seemed to care too much about

what we were doing or thinking. Maybe in my case I missed any semblance of recognition. Just the simple difference of being a "somebody" on the job bank home in Newark and being one of five student nobodies in the Urban Studies Center might have been too much of an unexpected comedown. Possibly if John Bebout had shown a once a month interest in us at this period of the project, it might have been sufficient to keep the one stray sheep in the fold. But this may be only an index to my own subjectivity.

On the other hand, my present retrospective evaluation of this aspect of identity with the program leads me to feel that the independence we developed due to the lack of close supervision and care at the beginning might have been one of the virtues of this exploratory year. So it may be something to keep in mind, recognizing that "different prima donnas can subsist on varying numbers of curtain calls".

Digging into the Educational Pay Dirt

Having said in my opening statement that the year wrought changes in my attitudes concerning education, job and life, I should like to spell out these ideas more specifically.

During the first semester, I took $5\frac{1}{2}$ courses, including the course in speed reading which ran for three ^{hours} ~~years~~ every Tuesday night. The one-half course resulted from a first hour overlap and conflict with Harry Brodemeier's Seminar in Social Theory. Jackson Toby's course in Criminology collided with the first part of this fascinating and cerebrally stimulating course conducted by Harry Brodemeier. This and Bob Outman's Sociology of Metropolis were the

two courses I took both semesters which were conducted on a unique graduate level of discussion and participation.

Although Bob Outman's course contained far more practical information for the average Urban Studies Fellow, Harry's course altered my appreciation and renewed my faith in 1962 University education. It gave me a wonderful chance to observe the role of the professor in stimulating the intellectual development and growth of graduate and undergraduate students. It proved to me that education is active cerebral involvement with a subject and a teacher who is secure enough in his command of the subject matter to welcome and encourage total participation by all students. The tremendous personal lift I got from sitting in on an hour and fifteen minutes of this seminar each week was the true beginning of my change in attitude toward Rutgers and the caliber of its offerings. When later I heard Dr. Predmasier's Brookings presentation on "Human Renewal", I was delighted to know that the Urban Studies Center had latched onto this inspirational academic dynamo as a part-time staff member for its Human Renewal Project.

I hope that this gratuitous accolade can also be accepted as one Fellow's vote of approval of the plan to install him as Director of the Fellowship Educational Program. No one, in my opinion, is better equipped than he to assume this important responsibility and I can only hope and pray that other mentally curious Fellows in future years can somehow be made aware of the very special quality of this course and its professor.

Another course from which any Urban Studies specialist could profit greatly is Jackson Toby's Criminology. Although his method of stimulating thought and group involvement stems from a vastly different personal need and motivational system, the end result is almost as positive. Students want to read the assignments before class so that they will not be too embarrassed at the acute pique and histrionic humor of his sharp-shooting questions and dramatic outbursts. Toby, in my estimation, should be a required exposure for every future Fellow. He's a progressive thinking spellbinder.

For future Urban Studies Fellows who have not recently had sociology or psychology, I would recommend a combination of Toby's Social Problems and Upton's Social Psychology. Both of them explore and explode a welter of attitudes, values and mythologies on which most of us oldster four-square Americans have been weaned, reared and deluded.

The above combination of courses and professors, I feel sure, will give any but the most traditional and conservative Fellow a sampling of Rutgers' progressive socio-psychological orientation. It was these courses in combination with Popance's Urban Studies Seminar which revamped my reaction pattern to the function of the Center and the overall contribution the University is making to the education of the 1962 student interested in getting a socially functional education.

It was the experience of meeting and associating with a broad cross-section of graduate and undergraduate students, learning

how they think and feel about their studies and the future of their world, which has given me renewed respect for Rutgers University's educational standards in the mid-twentieth century.

The exhilaration and excitement of the youthful mind, the superior knowledge of Bob Gutman in my own field of race relations, the chance to question and compare my values and concepts with students and faculty began to point the way toward a personal renaissance of learning and attitude. Looking back over my past to graduation from Brown University in 1935, it would seem that I went to college before I was ready. Today, if I could do that which would most satisfy me for the rest of my life, it would be to live, learn and teach at the University level.

Ambivalent Feelings

Because this is impossible without a graduate degree, I shall return to my job with rather mixed feelings. During the past year, my horizons have expanded so markedly that I cannot approach the old job with the old myopia. Even though I was dubbed an idealistic visionary by some and a frustrated do-gooder by others, and considering the fact that I was a bit of both, in nine short months the idealism has been converted to realism and I don't have enough frustration left to generate my old human relations aggressiveness against those who don't live and breathe the pure democratic credo. It is almost as if the knowledge and insights I have acquired of Metropolis and its people has whittled away at the zealous fervor with which I formerly tackled the day's work. I seem to have lost some of the specious spark of the raw and rampant rectifier of society's ills

and am now far more interested in a more scientific while less emotional approach.

I am not at all sure that integrated classrooms, ipso facto, mean equality of education for Negroes as much as they portend disequilibrium of both Negro and white education.

I am more certain that equal education for disadvantaged whites, Puerto Ricans and Negroes all going to the same school in the heart of the City's slums is not equal in any way, except equally bad for all.

After this year, I am certain that disadvantaged children living in blighted neighborhoods are getting inferior educations regardless of integration or all official protestations to the contrary. I feel quite confident that the "Human Renewal" proposal for a New Jersey neighborhood is one of the few ameliorative approaches to America's Educational Dilemma in which I could become seriously active. Something like this can result in change.

A Change in Job Approach

In short, the irony of this wonderful year of reading and listening is becoming an all too obvious paradox as far as my job satisfaction is concerned.

I think that the Director of a Commission on Group Relations should believe in integration and open occupancy housing without any qualifications. I further believe that he should be as sincere in his desire to keep whites in the central city as he is in his conviction that all economically able Negroes should be encouraged to seek their best possible accommodations in any part of urbia or suburbia they desire.

And certainly I believe that any white man who seriously questions the equality of opportunity in any and/or all of these goals on which the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, CORE, etc. have set their sights, should not be directing an agency which stands for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and prejudice.

What I am saying is that in this crucial race relations arena of 1962, "a little knowledge is not a dangerous thing". It is a salutary defense mechanism for the Group Relations Executive, for if he sees too far ahead, knows too much, questions too deeply, his whole *raison d'être* as well as his *modus operandi* can be thrown out of whack. In other words, it is probably a fortuitous blessing that most of us race relations specialists were kept too busy righting the wrongs of society to keep up with all of the research by the academicians. Had we known all of the findings, we might not have been able to remain so ignorantly idealistic. But on the other hand, had we not maintained the positivism of zealots, we quite likely would have rendered many of our present gains impossible because of our intelligent caution. Ignorance may not have been bliss, but it did help to produce the Supreme Court Decision of 1954 and the sit-ins of 1960. Had we waited on sociological research, I am sure neither would have come about quite so quickly.

But what I am relating here is the personal problem of motivation for local community action on the part of a director of a Mayor's Commission on Group Relations and I am saying quite bluntly that this year at the Urban Studies Center has greatly modified my social and psychological approaches to the accomplishment of the anti-discrimination

mission. In brief, I am no longer convinced that our former techniques of education for democratic action were appropriate to the goals we sought. And most paradoxically, I am not now sure that the goal of integration in housing will at this point in our history lead toward a more fruitful assimilation of the Negro in the mainstream of American life.

Maybe this doubting and questioning is a more wholesome attitude with which to work toward a better society and more viable communities of the future. Only reality testing in the backyards of Newark will answer my questions. The fact remains that whatever eventuates at the Newark neighborhood level, this year at the Urban Studies Center has radically altered my simplistic and somewhat naive positivism in one of our nation's most complex psycho-social areas.

A Refreshed Look At Life

As this year at the Rutgers Urban Studies Center draws to a close, I recall walking up the soft red-carpeted stairway of Woodlawn with Belle. She said: "I bet you'll be happy when this year is over and you can get back to your job". I told her quite sincerely that going back to Newark is going to be hard to take. I also said that this has been the most gratifying experience of my adult life.

I feel sure she didn't quite get what I meant, but because the experience has been such a revelation and joy to me, I'm going to see if I can put some of my feelings into words.

Probably more than any single fact or event of the year, the most moving aspect of the Fellowship program has been the opportunity it gave all of us to^{go} back to school. If every adult between

the ages of 35 and 55 could have such a chance to renew his acquaintance with books and learning, I believe the future of our cities and our nation would take on a far more optimistic hue. The shot in the arm and the stimulating revival in the pursuit of knowledge which this year gave me is the most important contribution of the Urban Studies Center.

Without it, I could have worked along in the same old self-satisfied job groove. I could have continued to delude myself with the convenient belief that my practical approach to the American Dilemma was the only empirically valid and sociologically sound one. Today I can appreciate the far greater variety of techniques for urban renewal, desegregation and relocation than I previously knew about. Tomorrow when I return, I shall be oriented in new research and action directions. But mainly I shall be experimenting with new ways to solve old problems. The days of exhortation, pleading and discussion will be supplanted with imaginative and unique techniques, none of which will have a strictly race relations intent or content.

It is almost as if this past nine months has allowed me for the first time in twenty years to place my job in its proper perspective in relation to the life of the city and my own life.

I shall certainly continue to develop new variations on the main theme, but I believe the new emphasis will be on the off-beat rather than the down-beat....which is another way of saying that when a Fellow goes back to school at age 49, the least he can do is learn different means of achieving age old ends. So if five

other Fellows and I don't go back to our old jobs and lives with new attitudes on urban agency, then it isn't because the staff didn't give us the opportunity. From you, we were given the basic tools with which a new profession can be forged and tempered.

From the total experience, we should have developed a new lease on life. Speaking very personally, I should like to hold one foot in the door at Woodlawn while hopping through the rubble and blight of Newark on the other.

So if there's any place on your team for a human relations worker with a smattering of urban agency and a new academic lease on life, I think I can help to put the show on the road.

If, on the other hand, nothing tangible should materialize for the future, you are all responsible for one Fellow's metamorphosis and revival.

Believe me, I thank you sincerely.

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